

Additional Notes on Cypripedium kentuckiense Reed

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Since publication of Cypripedium kentuckiense Reed in July 1981, I have received several letters of correspondence about its being elsewhere in Kentucky. I am surprised that someone had not named this orchid years ago. Over the past six months I have been able to mount up some of the several thousand specimens of still unmounted plants I had collected either while I lived in Kentucky (Jan. 1947 to Aug. 1950) or since that time from my many collecting trips during the past thirty years. In all I have amassed over 50,000 specimens of vascular plants from Kentucky alone.

Before going to Morehead State University (then Morehead State College) in September of 1947, I had taught for a short time at Union College at Barboursville in Knox County (Jan. to June. 1947). Among other courses I taught there was a botany course in which students collected plants about their home areas. One student took me to her home farm (about May 28th) some distance west of Barboursville and showed me this beautiful white Cypripedium growing in an alluvial area at the edge of a woods. Being new to Kentucky at the time, I thought I would find more of this plant elsewhere.

My next contact with this orchid was the following year in Morehead with the type specimen cited in my July paper. which is in the Reed Herbarium. It had been brought to Rowan County from Elliott County by Mr. Hagen, then a teacher of agriculture at Morehead, or one of his students, and planted in his garden. I had the good fortune of seeing it flower for three years.

Spring Flora was one of my more popular classes at Morehead, and for three years students of that class and to some degree those in the General Botany classes collected plants especially in their home areas for projects. On one of our botanical class trips, we came upon a few plants of this orchid in flower on our way to Oligonunk and Kinnikonink, in Lewis County. I did not allow students to take any specimens as each thought he needed one. However, I did return a week later by myself to get one for the record.

The next year, another student turned in a specimen with his botany collection from Rowan County (cited in my July paper. and also in the Reed Herbarium). Meantime, I had collected a fruiting specimen (co-type, in Reed Herbarium) from a stand of this orchid a student lead me to in Carter County. He had told me about a tall white Lady's-slipper earlier that summer near his home in that county.

Various persons over the past 30 years have told me about this orchid in Kentucky. Some have sent me specimens. I am encouraging those persons who have written me recently to send me a single flowering specimen for the record with all pertinent data. In addition, several persons have invited me to Kentucky to visit their stand this spring, a trip which I shall greatly enjoy.

The description of Cypripedium kentuckiense Reed given in my July paper was that of the type specimen cited therein and the co-type, in accordance with the International Rules. As with all species, when more specimens are examined, some variation in size of structures, color of flower, height and growing habitats can be expected. Note that Linnaeus's few worded descriptions of species are now expanded into full page descriptions. Since publication I have seen specimens in which the flower is somewhat larger and more yellow-white, the rather blunt saccate lower petal somewhat larger, and the plants a little taller or shorter, especially from Knox County. I am sure that as more plants are found and studied, additional characters of interest will be significant. This type of thing always happens, especially with a plant that has generated as much interest as this one has.

As mentioned in my previous paper, Cypripedium kentuckiense is a native, and probably an endemic, to the Cumberland Plateau, being found sometimes in alluvial situations, sometimes near the slopes and bases of wooded areas in shaded situations. I can now say that it ranges from Lewis and Carter Counties, south to at least Knox, Rockcastle and Pulaski Counties in Kentucky. Quite recently, I have learned of a locality for this orchid in Scott County, Tennessee. Therefore, it should be looked for in Whitley and McCreary Counties.

Since my article was published in July, I have received several lucrative offers to tell where the plant could be found. One person even offered to pay my way to take him to such a locality to get some plants. Because so many people are inquiring about where to find and get this orchid, I shall not disclose any more exact localities. Although we talk about conserving and protecting rare and endangered species, it is those persons who want to show-and-tell who do the greatest dis-service to the concept. One group has written me that someone has already exterminated one population of this fine orchid-- I am sure because of their having shown it to the wrong persons. I am equally sure that more publicity about this orchid by this group or others will only lead to the early extinction of this orchid, as every wildflower grower and orchid grower will have to have one to complete his collection. Telling exact localities, giving exact ecological details, showing over and over again pictures of the plant so there can be no doubt when someone finds the plant, are all ways of shortening the existence of a rare species, especially if it is an orchid.

Such extermination of orchid localities can be well documented. In 1962 Habenaria nivea was published as being abundant in a particular bog in New Jersey. A year later when the same locality was revisited, a hundred holes were found there instead, including the trowel. Nearby, the exact locality for the largest colony known in New Jersey for the Cranefly Orchis, Tipularia discolor, was published, and in 1963, again when revisited, every plant had been dug up and hauled away. People endanger species. in one way or another.

References

- Reed, C.F. Cypripedium kentuckiense Reed, a new species of orchid in Kentucky. *Phytologia* 48: 426-428. illus. 1981.
- P.B.C. Conservation Committee More Orchid Vandalism in New Jersey. *Bartonia*, No. 33: 12-13. 1963.